UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1992/SR.7
24 June 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

1992 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 16 June 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. SETH (India)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Cuna, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

92-56195 5834S (E)

/...

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said that the Executive Director's report (E/ICEF/1992/2 (Part I and Part II and Add.1)) provided a complete and well-organized overview of the main fields of activities and priorities of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Considerable progress had been achieved in the areas of primary health care, universal immunization and the control of diarrhoeal diseases, cholera, acute respiratory infections, malaria and dracunculiasis. UNICEF had continued to cooperate closely with other United Nations agencies in order to curb the spread of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which caused acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

2. Such basic activities of the Fund as assistance in the preparation of national programmes of action for children and mechanisms to carry out such programmes, as well as the promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had been both well-balanced and cost-efficient. The Fund's emergency operations and its provision of humanitarian assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances were particularly important. UNICEF should further develop its unique experience in those areas. The Executive Director's proposals on the reform of the United Nations system of operational activities, especially on the enhancement of inter-agency coordination both at Headquarters and in the field, and priority-setting, merited serious consideration.

3. His delegation favoured broader use of the Fund's potential to provide assistance to Russia, the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Eastern Europe during their arduous period of economic transition. The social and economic instability, decline in the standard of living and reduced State financing that accompanied the changes taking place in those countries adversely affected the situation of children in such areas as health care, pre-school education and the production of baby foods.

4. In Russia, the natural growth of population continued to decline. The infant mortality rate had risen to 16.8 per 1,000 for children up to the age of one year. Approximately 11 million families in the Russian Federation, including over 40 per cent of all children in the country, lived in extremely difficult circumstances. The situation was particularly critical in the northern regions of Russia. Families with disabled children, student families, many single-parent families, families of pregnant and breast-feeding mothers, families with many children, and families of refugees and forced migrants were the most disadvantaged.

5. Every year in Russia approximately 30,000 children were born with congenital and hereditary diseases. Some 70 to 75 per cent of such children were disabled, and their number had doubled over the past decade. Every year

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

more than 50,000 children were left without parental care. There were currently some 330,000 such children. Approximately 90 per cent of the inmates of children's homes were "social orphans", since they had living parents who for various reasons were unable to perform their parental duties.

6. Every year approximately 2,000 children and juveniles in Russia committed suicide and some 50,000 children left their families. A new category of young social outcasts who lived for months in cellars, attics and railway stations had emerged. Crimes and other offences by minors had increased, as had the number of serious crimes committed not only by juveniles but also by children. The number of crimes committed by gangs had also risen.

7. Those statistics gave only a partial picture of the complex situation of children in Russia. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation was currently unable to undertake a comprehensive programme that would solve those problems completely. A number of major government child-welfare programmes were on the verge of collapse.

8. UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) had recognized the need to provide assistance to Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States in order to prevent the further deterioration of the situation of children and other vulnerable groups during the transitional period. His delegation hoped that the Executive Board at its current session would adopt a decision on the practical implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the UNICEF/WHO mission to Russia in February 1992, and on further cooperation between UNICEF and the Russian Federation. The Fund's increased assistance to the Russian Federation should not be detrimental to the interests of developing countries, and supplementary resources would have to be mobilized. The Russian Federation would continue to cooperate fully with UNICEF and, as far as possible, participate in the financing of the Fund's activities.

9. Mr. TRAXLER (Italy) said that UNICEF had been particularly instrumental in carrying out successful humanitarian operations and establishing such innovative practices as "corridors of peace" and "days of tranquillity". The Fund should further develop and extend such operations, while respecting the integrated United Nations response necessary for the effectiveness and continuity of emergency interventions.

10. International developments called for multilateral organizations to play an increasing role in the promotion of the human factor in sustainable development processes. The Executive Board should specify the commitments and modalities that would allow UNICEF to display optimum operational effectiveness and administrative efficiency. In order to respond adequately to new international expectations, the United Nations system must integrate and coordinate its operational activities and stimulate national execution and capacity-building with the involvement of local communities and non-governmental organizations. The participation of UNICEF in inter-agency

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

task forces and joint commissions and missions could help the Fund identify key areas and priorities. More than ever, UNICEF activities should be action-oriented and stimulate national responses.

11. Italy had taken a number of steps to respond to the challenges raised by the World Summit for Children. An Ad Hoc National Commission had been established with the mandate of preparing Italy's national plan of action. Preparations for the implementation of that plan of action were well under way and should be completed in the near future.

12. In spite of the severe budgetary constraints imposed by its financial situation, Italy had done its utmost to maintain the level of its financial contributions to UNICEF. It commended donor countries that had increased their contributions to the Fund and hoped that cost-sharing would be distributed more equitably among donors, especially the major donors. In 1991, Italy had contributed 1 billion lire for emergency operations in the southern Sudan and, recently, 4 billion lire had been approved as supplementary funds, 2 billion of which had been earmarked for street children in Brazil.

13. With the end of the cold war, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe had begun the transition from centrally planned to market economies. The issues involved in that complex process defied simple solution. The United Nations system and UNICEF in particular should work closely with the Governments of those countries and with international organizations and agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as the European Community to identify areas of comparative advantage in order to maximize the efficiency of their various interventions.

14. Humanitarian activities should be closely linked to rehabilitation and sustainable development prospects, the main purpose of which should be to stimulate and catalyse the many existing and underemployed resources in the countries considered, while at the same time promoting participation and a convergence of efforts. In that regard, the Italian Parliament had approved a new law on assistance to Central and Eastern Europe. Additional funds had been earmarked for that purpose and did not affect the amount of Italy's official development assistance (ODA).

15. The establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs would enable the United Nations system to respond in a coordinated, prompt and efficient manner to the increasing number of emergency situations. His delegation was confident that all agencies, and especially UNICEF, would lend their full support to the new department and its activities.

16. His delegation greatly appreciated the work undertaken by the budget reference group to review the budget format. However, while it endorsed the group's proposals for the review of the existing budget documents, it

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

considered that some of the comments made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) should be taken into account and reflected in the Executive Board's decisions.

17. The findings and suggestions contained in the progress report on the Bamako Initiative (E/ICEF/1992/L.6) could help improve the conceptual framework and practical implementation of the programmes and activities promoted by the Initiative. The evaluation sponsored by the Government of the United Kingdom in cooperation with other bilateral and multilateral agencies, including UNICEF, could result in a major expansion of the Initiative.

18. Mr. VACEK (Czechoslovakia) said that, while Czechoslovakia was experiencing difficulties in implementing the principles and conclusions adopted by the World Summit for Children, particularly during a period of economic transition, it had managed to develop long-term programmes to support and protect children and youth. A report on the state of children in Czechoslovakia had been prepared on the initiative of the National Committee for UNICEF, and a working group of volunteers had been established.

19. In Africa, conditions for children were the worst in the world and were expected to deteriorate in the years to come. The international community should respond adequately in order to reverse that negative trend. The political and economic developments in the European and Asian countries that had dismantled totalitarian regimes in the past three years also posed pressing problems. Armed conflicts had broken out in some of those countries, and the fall of totalitarian regimes had brought to light long-neglected social problems of children and young people. The transition to a market-oriented economy further complicated those problems.

20. Czechoslovakia was not itself applying for humanitarian aid. On the contrary, in 1991 it had granted considerable assistance to other countries. However, it urgently required UNICEF involvement in the areas of advocacy, policy-making and technical assistance.

21. His delegation did not entirely agree with the proposed UNICEF activities listed in document E/ICEF/1992/L.14. It was surprising that the recommendations regarding assistance to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were limited to assistance from rather uncertain supplementary funds. Although his delegation fully understood the reasons that had led the Executive Director to make such a recommendation, it believed that the Executive Board should approve the conclusion listed in Option A, namely, the granting of assistance from both general resources and supplementary funds. Assistance to children affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe should constitute a separate programme.

22. His delegation considered that the chairmanship of the Executive Board should be subject to the practice of rotation by geographical groups. It fully supported the adoption of the Standard Basic Cooperation Agreement as

(Mr. Vacek, Czechoslovakia)

submitted and was in favour of maintaining the current organizational structure for external relations activities at UNICEF headquarters. It greatly appreciated the policy paper on education for development (E/ICEF/1992/L.8), long awaited by the National Committees. Czechoslovakia also supported the conclusions of the progress report on the Bamako Initiative (E/ICEF/1992/L.6) and the report on the UNICEF programme approach to the prevention of HIV/AIDS (E/ICEF/1992/L.11). With respect to the document entitled "Controlling acute respiratory infections" (E/ICEF/1992/L.12), his delegation considered that the roles and responsibilities of UNICEF and WHO should be more clearly defined.

23. One of the basic UNICEF documents was "An overview of UNICEF policies, organization and working methods" (E/ICEF/670/Rev.3). As that document had not been revised since 1984, it was high time to update it. Finally, his delegation fully supported the Executive Director's proposal to improve the efficiency of the Executive Board and to strengthen its bureau.

24. Mr. SCHILLING (Germany) noted that, although Germany faced serious budgetary constraints as a result of the process of unification, the country's contribution to UNICEF general resources had steadily increased. In addition to its regular contribution, the German Government had always provided additional funding and grants for emergencies and would continue to do so in the future. More than 8,000 volunteers of the German National Committee for UNICEF were participating in mobilization and fund-raising campaigns; as a result of their efforts, UNICEF continued to be the most popular United Nations organization in Germany.

25. His delegation fully agreed with the priorities UNICEF had set in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1995 (E/ICEF/1992/3). The Fund and its Executive Director should continue their efforts to enhance the efficiency of UNICEF at both the field and headquarters levels and strengthen inter-agency cooperation. In that regard, the German Government was pleased to note that the coordination of United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance was being improved.

26. Germany had undertaken the necessary steps to comply with the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children. Earlier in the year, Germany had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

27. Performance in the field was the key to the success of UNICEF. The Fund's achievements in the area of immunization were outstanding. UNICEF should continue its efforts in that area, follow up on successful programmes so that they promoted sustainable levels of development and continue to develop strategies to benefit the poorest segments of society. His delegation commended the joint efforts of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and WHO to control acute respiratory infections, as well as the Fund's cooperation with WHO in combating the AIDS pandemic. He noted with

(Mr. Schilling, Germany)

satisfaction that primary health care remained at the top of the Fund's agenda of activities, and welcomed the evaluation of the Bamako Initiative that was being sponsored by Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

28. The problem of underdevelopment would not be solved unless the international community took vigorous measures to prevent overpopulation and lower high birth rates. UNICEF should step up its efforts in the fields of family planning and birth control, in close cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), WHO and other relevant agencies. Both donor and recipient countries should be prepared to put the well-being and the needs of society's most vulnerable groups at the top of their national agendas. Extremely high military budgets in many countries were another major obstacle to the improvement of the well-being of children and women. No external assistance could make up for the diversion of scarce budgetary resources from the social to the military sector.

29. Democracy and human rights were of fundamental significance for development, and good governance was vital to economic and social progress. The fulfilment of those preconditions would ensure that development aid benefited those who really needed it. Moreover, investing in people, especially young people, would enable the citizens of developing countries to help themselves.

30. Mr. LEAKEY (Jamaica) welcomed the report of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1992/2 (Parts I and II)) and endorsed the proposals contained in the informal paper entitled "Ten points for reform in the United Nations system's operational activities".

31. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Children, his Government had prepared a national programme of action which would shortly be presented to the Cabinet. With continued UNICEF support, Jamaica hoped to broaden the scope of child survival and development activities, expand basic urban services and intensify advocacy and social mobilization efforts.

32. Like most developing countries, Jamaica was endeavouring to fulfil its moral and legal obligations to children in the face of severe economic constraints. However, as his country attached great importance to the principle of a "first call for children", it had managed to maintain all of its child care programmes. Two new initiatives which sought to meet the needs of children in especially difficult circumstances were a community-based rehabilitation programme for disabled children and a programme to address the problems of street children.

33. Under an agreement between the Governments of Jamaica and the Netherlands and the Netherlands Committee for UNICEF, the "debt relief for children" initiative would be implemented in Jamaica over the next three years. Programme delivery would be enhanced in such areas as health care, children in especially difficult circumstances and women and socio-economic development.

(Mr. Leakey, Jamaica)

His Government wished to propose that the definition of children in especially difficult circumstances should be broadened to include children who were either infected with AIDS or were at risk of contracting it, those who were born addicted to narcotic drugs, and those who were left without minimum care because their parents were incapacitated by drug abuse. That proposal sought to address the rapid increase over the past two years in the number of children in the developing world who fell into one or more of those categories.

34. With regard to the status of women, the UNICEF approach, which sought to empower women by giving them access to economic resources and social services, was of particular relevance in Jamaica, where 42 per cent of all households were headed by women. At the same time, the Fund's increasing emphasis on parenting had the potential to ensure that more men bore equal responsibility for children's welfare within the family. In preparation for the International Year of the Family in 1994, UNICEF should place greater emphasis on promoting family life as a means of decreasing the number of children in especially difficult circumstances.

35. In the context of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1995 (E/ICEF/1992/3), his delegation particularly supported strategies that promoted sustainability, national capacity-building, community participation, inter-agency cooperation and development with a human face. His Government appreciated the leading role played by UNICEF in addressing the human cost of structural adjustment policies and welcomed the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC), which sought to mitigate the adverse social consequences of such policies. Jamaica shared the concern of UNICEF for African children who had been victims of drought and civil war and for children in Central and Eastern Europe who were likely to suffer as a result of the difficult transformations which their societies were undergoing. UNICEF should obtain additional resources to meet those new needs without prejudice to its existing commitments.

36. The medium-term plan, however well formulated, could not be implemented unless sufficient organizational capabilities existed. His delegation therefore welcomed the increased emphasis on human resources planning and personnel management, and appreciated the work of the budget reference group, which had formulated guidelines for the presentation of the 1994-1995 budget, to be adopted by the Board in 1993.

37. Mr. LUNA (Peru) said that all efforts to address the problems of the world's children should be focused on implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children. Accordingly, bilateral donors, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations should provide UNICEF with sufficient resources to support Summit follow-up activities. National programmes of action should also be strengthened. Some of the national programmes already submitted contained innovative fund-raising

(Mr. Luna, Peru)

proposals which could be of great value to other countries, and it might be useful for UNICEF to prepare a handbook on internal resource-gathering, taking into account the experience of countries with efficient fund-raising mechanisms.

38. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean were currently forced to implement measures in the social sector to offset the burden which macroeconomic adjustment placed on the most vulnerable groups. A major thrust of those efforts was addressing the needs of children in order to honour the commitments made in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and at the World Summit for Children. The region had taken an active part in the follow-up to the World Summit, and his country had been the first to submit a national programme of action which contained an objective analysis of the situation of Peruvian children and women, acknowledged existing problems and proposed clear solutions for the short and medium terms.

39. Those problems should be viewed in the light of the severe economic crisis afflicting Peru. The country's infant mortality rate was one of the highest in Latin America, while approximately 45 per cent of all Peruvian children suffered from some degree of malnutrition. In 1990, only 52 per cent of the population had had access to safe drinking water. In the past 15 years, the maternal mortality rate had reached 33 per 10,000 live births.

40. The primary objectives of the programme of action were to reduce the infant mortality rate to 50 per 1,000 live births, the under-five mortality rate to 70 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality rate to 15 per 10,000 live births by the year 2000. Other goals included reducing the incidence of malnutrition by 50 per cent and increasing the supply of safe drinking water to ensure 94 per cent coverage by the year 2000.

41. His Government wished to express its appreciation to UNICEF for the generous support the Fund had provided to programmes to combat cholera in Peru and other countries. The progress made should, however, be viewed in the context of sustained action over the medium term in order to ensure that the agreed targets in such areas as health infrastructure and basic services could be met.

42. Much of the Fund's success in Latin America could be attributed to SAFLAC, which had played an important role as a catalyst; accordingly, a new impetus should be given to the Facility at the current session of the Board. The Latin American and Caribbean States had submitted a draft decision designed to strengthen and ensure the continuity of SAFLAC, and he hoped that it would be unanimously supported by the Board.

43. Mr. LEBA (Observer, Organization of African Unity) said that the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in close collaboration with UNICEF, was preparing for an international Donors Conference on Assistance to African Children, to be held at Dakar, Senegal, in November 1992. In June 1991, the

(Mr. Leba, Observer, OAU)

Council of Ministers of OAU had called upon all States members of OAU to prepare national programmes of action as a follow-up to the World Summit for Children; requested the OAU secretariat to convene a special donors' conference in 1992 to mobilize support for children; and requested assistance from the UNICEF Executive Board.

44. Over the past year, cooperation between OAU, UNICEF and the Government of Senegal had sped conference preparations. The conference had been publicized at all national, regional and intergovernmental meetings. OAU had developed a budget for the conference with technical assistance from UNICEF and was currently mobilizing contributions from individuals and organizations. He urged all member countries of the Executive Board to send representatives to the conference.

45. Mrs. STEWART (United States of America) said that UNICEF must not only sustain its achievements, but also respond to an increasing number of new and urgent global needs. The Secretary-General had acknowledged that reform of the United Nations Secretariat was essential if the Organization's response to those new challenges was to be both efficient and effective. Her delegation therefore welcomed the views put forward by UNICEF on that subject in the paper entitled "Ten points for reform in the United Nations system's operational activities".

46. UNICEF was to be commended for the progress made thus far in planning the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. During the past year, her Government had helped many other countries prepare national programmes of action; the United States programme of action would be issued later in 1992. It was to be hoped that all national programmes would result in specific, coordinated actions to benefit children.

47. Her delegation welcomed the additional information on external relations provided in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1995 (E/ICEF/1992/3). Similar attention should be given to external relations planning in future country programmes as well.

48. The United States strongly endorsed the Fund's contribution to the global fight against AIDS, its support for family planning and vaccine supply, and its response to emergencies. Now more than ever, collaboration with other agencies must be pursued in all areas to ensure that resources and energy were focused on the achievement of world-wide child survival and development goals.

49. While the achievement of the 1990 goal of universal child immunization was of undeniable significance, sustaining and expanding immunization coverage throughout the world, particularly in Africa, was equally important. UNICEF should continue to work with countries in order to ensure an adequate supply of quality vaccines; in that connection, the Fund's contribution to the children's vaccine initiative deserved full support.

(Mrs. Stewart, United States)

50. Many of the significant changes that had occurred in the world during the past year had placed hundreds of thousands of children in urgent need of services of which UNICEF was an irreplaceable provider. The Fund's contribution was vital to relief efforts in Iraq, Somalia and other countries in need, and her delegation was proud of UNICEF staff, who worked in difficult circumstances and often at personal risk to provide emergency aid. While the capability of UNICEF to respond rapidly to emergency situations was appreciated, she urged the Fund to cooperate fully through the collaborative mechanisms established by the new Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

51. An equally important opportunity for assistance had arisen in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and her delegation supported the Executive Director's recommendations outlined in document E/ICEF/1992/L.14. It was essential for the activities of all United Nations agencies in that area to be carefully coordinated and for overhead and administrative costs to be kept as low as possible. In addition, programme activities must lead to national capacity-building so that a rapid transition to self-sustained national action could take place in those countries.

52. Efforts in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States should in no way detract from the priority which the Executive Board had given to the developing countries, particularly those in Africa. She strongly encouraged UNICEF to follow up the recommendations of the Bamako Initiative evaluation. Progress in child development would also be measured by action taken to promote and improve basic education, and her delegation supported the actions to achieve that goal described in document E/ICEF/1992/L.8. Those efforts depended upon the collaborative relationships which UNICEF maintained with UNESCO and the National Committees for UNICEF, which would in turn play an important role in UNICEF activities in the former Soviet Union.

53. Programme effectiveness would also depend on the cost-effective management of administrative and financial resources. UNICEF had done much to improve the structure and format of budget documents and streamline global funds. The UNICEF secretariat and the budget reference group had made substantial progress in addressing some of the concerns which her delegation had raised during previous Executive Board sessions about the absence of a clear and justifiable link between programme proposals and the administrative structure required to implement them.

54. The Executive Board would soon have to take an important decision with regard to the location of UNICEF headquarters. Her delegation was prepared to consider the possibility of relocation within the New York metropolitan area and to choose the option that was most consistent with sound financial management.

(Mrs. Stewart, United States)

55. The growth in programmes and resources warranted continued scrutiny and improved governance procedures. The recommendations contained in document E/ICEF/1992/CRP.5 would help to rationalize the Board's work, but more could and should be done: better scheduling and a conscientious review of draft decisions and their reporting requirements would help.

56. Mr. HAQUE (Observer for Bangladesh) said that the current session of the Executive Board was a special one for his country in view of the fact that UNICEF had conferred the Maurice Pate Award for 1992 on the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). Bangladesh had succeeded in overcoming both man-made and natural disasters with great fortitude and resilience. Poverty did not act as a barrier to change; indeed, the poorest and most disadvantaged seemed to have the greatest urge to learn, to educate themselves and to devote their limited energies towards the creation of a better life for their children.

57. More than 50 per cent of the population of Bangladesh was under the age of 19. Nevertheless, the country had achieved a near miracle by increasing immunization coverage from only 2 per cent in 1985 to more than 80 per cent in 1990, and in that achievement UNICEF had been a great partner. Wishing to build on the success of the expanded programme on immunization (EPI), Bangladesh had launched its "EPI-plus" programme which would provide, in addition to the five antigens, six additional services - three for the mother and three for the child. Mothers received iron supplementation, risk-screening during pregnancy, and family-planning services, while children benefited from vitamin A distribution, diarrhoeal-disease control, and the promotion of breast-feeding. Women, and mothers in particular, were the focal point of the Government's concerns, as could be seen in the country's fourth Five-Year Plan.

58. With regard to water and sanitation, 80 per cent of rural households in Bangladesh were within 150 metres of a tube well, 800,000 of which had been sunk with the help of UNICEF. Under the Bangladesh National Plan of Action all families should enjoy access to safe water by the year 1995 and sanitary-latrine coverage would increase from 8 per cent to 35 per cent.

59. Primary education had been compulsory since 1990. The adoption of non-formal educational approaches and help from non-governmental organizations had brought girls, in particular, into education and training for life skills. While the primary education enrolment rate was 70 per cent, the drop-out rate was high, and the Government hoped to reduce it. In an effort to encourage girls to complete their basic education, girls in rural areas were provided with free education up to class VIII. Whereas only 4 per cent of primary school teachers had been women in 1978, the figure now stood at 19 per cent, with a target of 50 per cent set for the year 2000.

(Mr. Hague, Observer, Bangladesh)

60. Bangladesh endorsed the Executive Director's report and supported the programme elements, flexibility and decentralization of UNICEF activities, which ensured smooth implementation and high-quality programme delivery.

61. The recently concluded United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had been a watershed development in the protection and restoration of the environment and sustainable development. The chapters of Agenda 21 dealing with children, youth, women and health should lead to appropriate follow-up action by the Executive Board, since children and environment were inseparable.

62. Ms. WANG Shuxian (China), welcomed the fact that one year after the World Summit for Children, most countries had taken steps to implement the World Declaration and Plan of Action, and 117 countries had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Such progress would have been impossible without UNICEF support. The past year had also been one of success for UNICEF country programmes: some 127 countries had implemented programmes of cooperation, and immunization and oral rehydration strategies alone saved the lives of more than 4 million children a year. The social mobilization, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation aspects of UNICEF country programmes had had a particularly positive impact.

63. Even so, poverty and disease still claimed the lives of millions of children every year, one out of five people still lacked clean water and safe sanitation, and roughly one fourth of the world's adult population was still illiterate. Those were all great obstacles to child survival, protection and development. Peace and development were still the basic prerequisites for child development, and the international community should establish a new international political and economic order that would allow children to grow up in a peaceful and stable environment. China supported the UNICEF principle of a "first call for children" and the strategy for assisintg Africa first.

64. China had honoured the commitment it had made at the World Summit for Children by promulgating the National Programme of Action for Child Development in China in the 1990s in February 1992. The Programme stipulated that by the year 2000 infant and under-five mortality rates would be reduced by one third, maternal mortality rates and malnutrition in children under five would be halved, and illiteracy in the 15-40 age group would be eradicated. In December 1991 the Standing Committee of the Seventh National People's Congress had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in September 1991 it had approved the Protection of Minors Act.

65. Cooperation in recent years between UNICEF and China had been most satisfactory. Thanks to such cooperation, China had achieved the child immunization target of 85 per cent at the provincial and county levels, trained more than 100,000 village doctors and improved the quality of maternal and child health care. China had promoted the universalization of elementary education and trained more than 60,000 kindergarten and primary school

(Ms. Wang Shuxian, China)

teachers, with importance attached to the education of girls in remote, minority and poverty areas. China had also helped women to overcome illiteracy and had organized training courses to provide them with practical skills and income-generating activities that could help improve their living conditions and those of their children.

66. Mr. BANGALI (Sierra Leone) said that cooperation between his Government and UNICEF, especially during the past three years, had produced considerable improvement in the somewhat dismal statistics regarding women and children which had plagued his country for so long. Sierra Leone's infant mortality rate, once among the world's highest, had fallen to 153 per 1,000 live births, and there had been equally significant reductions in the under-five and maternal mortality rates. The full immunization coverage rate for children had reached the target of 75 per cent in 1990, and there were indications that that percentage had increased in 1991. To ensure the durability of those achievements, UNICEF had supported the creation of an elaborate support structure which promoted self-sustaining primary health-care facilities, water and environmental sanitation, women in development and basic education.

67. Sierra Leone was undergoing considerable difficulties, caused partly by the rebel invasion of its Eastern and Southern Provinces. The forced exodus of its people from those areas, coupled with a large influx of refugees - mainly women and children - from Liberia had aggravated an already bad economic situation. The loss of revenue from the Eastern Province - the main revenue-earning region - had had a significant impact on the country's economy and had wrought havoc upon the living conditions of the inhabitants. Yet that situation had not halted the implementation of the Bamako Initiative, although the pace had been slower than that initially envisaged. The network of primary health units was now largely managed and financed by the communities they served through an effective cost-sharing system, and financial and technical support from UNICEF for the construction of more than 1,000 improved wells had ensured the supply of clean water to thousands of rural children and women, drastically reducing deaths from diarrhoea and related diseases.

68. An important development had been the agreement by the Ministry of Health to allow communities to retain some of the funds generated at the local level through user fees. Some 20 per cent of local funds were currently retained for the upkeep of health facilities and to offset the cost of providing services to those who could not pay, and his delegation appealed to donor countries to increase their support for such programmes.

69. Sierra Leone fully shared the views expressed in the Executive Director's report concerning a new order for children. UNICEF should play a more active role in reducing the widening gaps between North and South in the areas of tertiary education, research and development expenditure and the proportion of scientific and technical personnel, given the significant impact of technological progress in the world. Sierra Leone endorsed, in particular, the proposals contained in paragraphs 28 (a), (d), (f) and (h) of the report (E/ICEF/1992/2 (Part I)).

(Mr. Bangali, Sierra Leone)

70. His delegation commended UNICEF efforts to strengthen women's role in development and the Fund's continued support for national policies to advance the status of women and girls. Concurring with UNICEF that women played a key role as community mobilizers and health agents, his Government also attached great importance to the survival, protection and development of the girl child and aimed to make all facilities, particularly health and education services, accessible to all children regardless of their sex. While customary initiation rites were still practised in Sierra Leone, they were increasingly losing their cultural significance, and there were few discernible differences between the current situations of male and female children.

71. His delegation fully supported UNICEF efforts to integrate AIDS activities into its country programmes, believing that a heightened global awareness of the disease would facilitate the development of a global strategy to combat its spread.

72. Sierra Leone supported the Executive Director's recommendation regarding the revised medium-term plan (E/ICEF/1992/3, para. 330) and the budget proposals submitted to the Board, particularly the innovative and cost-cutting measures initiated by UNICEF. It was to be hoped that the continuing economic and social crises in recipient countries would not derail those admirable initiatives. His delegation also welcomed the report of ACABQ on the proposed budget formats (E/ICEF/1992/AB/L.18).

73. In conclusion, he drew attention to the need for the chairmanship of the Board to rotate among the different regional groups in order to ensure that the principle of equity was properly observed and to bring UNICEF in line with the practice followed elsewhere in the United Nations system.

74. Mr. ASSA'EDI (Yemen) commended the Executive Director's report and the specific recommendations contained in it for the new international order, which his country supported inasmuch as they afforded an appropriate general framework for collective international action to put an end to poverty, ignorance and disease. During Yemen's 30-year relationship with UNICEF prior to unification in May 1990, both parts of the country had benefited from a large number of child education, adult literacy, health and drinking-water supply programmes. He hoped that that cooperation would continue in the future. His country was also concerned that the international instruments adopted by the World Summit for Children should be translated into programmes and plans of action appropriate to the current situation in his country, in accordance with the national population strategy and the establishment of a democratic order permitting broad popular participation.

75. In the light of the complex economic and social circumstances facing his country following the Gulf crisis and with the return of some 1 million Yemeni emigrants, and the influx of tens of thousands of displaced Somalis, many new problems had arisen. He expressed appreciation for the positive role that UNICEF had played and was playing in helping Yemen face those problems.

(Mr. Assa'edi, Yemen)

76. He commended the documentation of the session. He hoped that UNICEF would play a pioneer role at meetings and conferences convened by donor States. Developing countries should receive technical and material assistance in preparing and implementing national plans of action to implement international instruments on children. Special attention should be paid to the role of women in development and to women's active participation in programmes for providing education to all.

77. A study should be made of the best ways of helping countries that had been successful in the field of child immunization, and they should be assisted in ensuring successful follow-up. Special attention should also be paid to developing national expertise and skills so as to ensure self-reliance to the extent possible. The role of UNICEF in dealing with emergencies should be continued and developed.

78. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of UNICEF as reflected in the country programmes for the States of the Middle East and North Africa, particularly the new programme for Palestinian children contained in document E/ICEF/1992/P/L.32, which described the distressing situation of Palestinian women and children. UNICEF had been providing assistance to Palestinian refugee children since 1980, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/81. The new programme was the culmination of those humanitarian efforts and merited the highest praise.

79. It was regrettable that, under the new humanitarian order, some children were currently suffering from harsh and destructive circumstances in various places in the world, particularly in Iraq and Somalia. The tragic plight of those children should be accorded the highest priority. He commended the role played by UNICEF in drawing up area-focused programmes for Somalia in the light of the basic principles of the Bamako Initiative, which, in turn, would serve to build national capacity and raise the living standards of Somali women and children. The implementation of those programmes would take time, and he therefore hoped that there would be a continuation of essential humanitarian assistance to save women and children in Somalia from death and annihilation.

80. He agreed with the statement in the Executive Director's report that, in spite of the encouraging achievements which had culminated in the convening of the Summit for Children, the realization of strategies to promote child survival, protection and development continued to face challenges, particularly in the least developed countries. Cooperation and solidarity were called for to eliminate the root cause of childhood afflictions, namely, poverty. The international community must give the issue of poverty the same priority it gave peace and environmental protection on the agenda of the new humanitarian order.

81. He was confident that UNICEF, in keeping with its past record, would assume that responsibility, so that the expectations of the poor would be met

(Mr. Assa'edi, Yemen)

and disparities would be reduced. Governments and local societies must work together to promote equitable social and human growth, and the achievement of minimum targets for children must be regarded as the essence of the final development challenge of the twentieth century.

82. Mr. SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that his Government had responded to the needs of Sri Lankan children by preparing a national programme of action for children as a follow-up to the World Summit. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) would hold its second conference on children in September 1992 in Sri Lanka, with the aim of reviewing and strengthening the regional plan of action and achieving World Summit goals in the subregion. Sri Lanka was particularly pleased that the UNICEF Maurice Pate Award had been presented to a fellow member of SAARC, Bangladesh.

83. Sri Lanka had achieved the goal of 80 per cent coverage of universal child immunization (UCI) in 1989, and had continued to make progress in that area. It planned to eradicate polio and neonatal tetanus well before 1995, and its new country programme focused on the serious problem of malnutrition, which it hoped to reduce significantly in the near future.

84. Through government measures to meet basic needs and strengthen primary health care the infant mortality rate had been lowered in 1990 to 19.4 per 1,000 live births. Various nutrition plans had been implemented and were closely linked with the Janasaviya Programme for the elimination of poverty launched by President Ranasinghe Premadasa. In addition, Sri Lanka greatly valued the UNICEF initiatives to alleviate poverty, such as the joint UNICEF/ILO international workshop on poverty held in 1991 in Santiago.

85. Sri Lanka was one of the few countries which provided welfare services to women and children throughout its territory, even in areas affected by armed conflict, and its women and children were accorded the maximum share of society's resources, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Declaration of the World Summit for Children. Health services in the conflict areas were functioning satisfactorily, thanks to the response by UNICEF and other agencies.

86. In 1990, a new Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Social Welfare had been established in response to the needs of refugees in general and children in particular. The Ministry had adopted measures to identify destitute children and reunited them with their families and in cooperation with other ministries and organiztaions was developing other social and educational projects for children in the conflict areas.

87. Sri Lanka commended UNICEF on its endeavours to prevent the spread of AIDS among children and pledged its full cooperation with UNICEF initiatives on AIDS. While his delegation applauded current efforts to streamline the United Nations system, it stressed that reorganization should not adversely affect the capacity of the UNICEF field office at Colombo, whose quick

(Mr. Silva, Sri Lanka)

response to emergencies in Sri Lanka had been greatly appreciated. Lastly, he commended UNICEF efforts to promote the integration of health services, a policy which had always been followed by Sri Lanka.

88. Mr. CAT (Uruguay) said that the situation of the family, and of children and women, in particular, had deteriorated to an unprecedented level in Uruguay as a result of the social and economic crisis of the 1980s, the inadequacy of the traditional sectoral approach of social policies and the lack of a comprehensive focus on poverty.

89. Accordingly, the Government had set itself the priority goal of tackling poverty on a comprehensive scale, with the active participation of the community as a whole. At the same time, specific measures were required to protect the most needy and vulnerable population groups, in particular women and children, from the adverse effects of economic adjustment policies. Valuable support had been received from UNICEF in the execution of programmes which provided care for children and women in marginal areas. Some 54 child and family care centres had been set up through the joint efforts of the Government, UNICEF - through SAFLAC - and non-governmental organizations, to provide care for pre-school children and to promote the social integration of underprivileged families.

90. Those and other measures, such as the baby-friendly hospital initiative, were designed to foster active community participation in the running of social services. His Government was endeavouring to ensure that its social policies were accompanied by a redefinition of strategies, the restructuring of State-run social care services and the reorientation of public social spending. The cooperation accorded to Uruguay in that undertaking by developed countries and such international organizations as UNICEF was invaluable.

91. The institution of MERCOSUR, the common market of the southern cone, had opened up new opportunities for Uruguay but also posed major challenges, which necessitated increased international cooperation to ensure the well-being of the Uruguayan people.

92. Uruguay's concern for the welfare of its children was manifested in the national plan of action it had formulated in response to the commitments of the World Summit for Children. The plan of action defined goals and activities at the national level for the next decade. Aimed at enhancing the quality of life of Uruguayan children and women, it had been prepared with the cooperation of health, education and nutrition sectors and the support of such international organizations as UNDP, UNICEF and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

93. Uruguay attached particular importance to the current session of the Executive Board, since it would mark the first in which Uruguay received UNICEF assistance through general funds. While those funds only represented a

(Mr. Cat, Uruguay)

small portion of the country's total requirements for the implementation of the cooperation programme, they would be of great value in assisting the most needy children and women. He wished in that connection to express his delegation's gratitude to the UNICEF regional office for Argentina, Chile and Uruguay for its efforts on behalf of the children and women of Uruguay.

94. Mr. CURGUS (Yugoslavia) said that the processes of disintegration which currently racked his country had left tens of thousands of wounded and dead, almost 2 million refugees and displaced persons and a large number of civilians trapped in war zones. Some 800,000 exiles were children under the age of 15. It was obvious that coordinated efforts by all sides and by the international community as a whole were vital to mitigate the suffering of those people, and in particular the most vulnerable groups.

95. Accordingly, his Government was making every effort to ensure that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children were implemented. It had provided substantial humanitarian relief to refugees within its territory and beyond, abjuring considerations of nationality or religious affiliation. Numerous appeals had been made to the warring sides, urging compliance with articles 22, 36 and 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the unobstructed evacuation of mothers and children from embattled areas and the free transport of foodstuffs and medical supplies.

96. The harsh economic sanctions recently imposed on Yugoslavia had seriously undermined the country's ability to continue its humanitarian relief activities, and their impact on refugees in its territory, 80 per cent of whom were women and children, was extremely adverse. The embargo affected even humanitarian relief provided by international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF. He appealed to the Executive Board to take steps to correct that situation and to ensure that the activities of humanitarian organizations and UNICEF were exempted from the sanctions regime.

97. Yugoslavia believed that UNICEF was a forum in which all political differences should be set aside in favour of cooperation for the benefit of the world's children. Under the new Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, promulgated in April 1992, the Federal Republic would continue to observe the rights and obligations assumed by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in international relations, including its membership in the United Nations and UNICEF, and it remained fully committed to the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation would therefore make every effort to promote the interests of UNICEF and the success of the current Board session.

98. He conveyed the sincere gratitude of the Government and peoples of Yugoslavia to all who had helped mitigate the suffering of children in his

(Mr. Curgus, Yugoslavia)

country, mentioning in particular the special role of UNICEF, its Executive Director and its staff. For the first time in its history, and after 10 years as an active donor to UNICEF, Yugoslavia had become the recipient of substantial aid from the Fund. Every effort must be made to ensure that Yugoslav children survived the horror and destruction of war and to overcome the national and religious divisions which had caused the country to disintegrate.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.